

*John Huffington*  
COULD YOU BE AS BRAVE AS THIS?

Patterson, Ada

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# Could You Be As Brave As This?

*The Story of John Huffington,  
Who, Blind, Deaf and Tortured,  
Is Still a Great Painter.*

By ADA PATTERSON

**C**OME IN." A hearty voice uttered the genial command. "I'm glad to know you're here. I know you are because I perceive faintly your outline. I am nearly blind. I am very deaf. And very bent. But very happy."

That was the greeting of the bravest man I have ever known. John Huffington is a soldier who has fought a life long battle with inherited maladies. He was doomed before birth to torturing disease. At sixty-two he looks eighty—until one enters into the shaft of the strong spirit that shines from his nearly sightless eyes. His body is warped by bones that began to bend as soft wood under the cruel strength of a giant hand, in his infancy, and that had twisted his figure into the semblance of advanced age since he was thirty-five. He has only *four per cent* of normal sight, which, being translated from the technicalities of the oculist and optician, means that he is ninety-six per cent blind. The bending of the bones out of their natural angle has nearly removed him from the world of sound. Only a faint and intermittent trickle passes the ob-

truding bones that have nearly closed the canal of the ear.

Yet this man jests and smiles and declares that he is very happy.

He is happy for two adequate reasons. Foremost because he is the "captain of his soul." He is the dauntless skipper of a ship about which the lightning plays and the thunder roars and to which the far billows of the endless sea send their message of menace. Scarcely second is the fact that amid physical pain he has always the solace of his work. The beloved work that is his passion. Tho ninety-six per cent blind, he paints pictures of scenes that he has known since his boyhood, and sells them to patrons who buy them for their merits, for their careful drawing, rich coloring and tender moods.

With his enormous handicaps he paints the quiet inlets and wave-caressed shores of his memories with such fidelity and such interpretative beauty that he sells them to America's best homes for prices that reach fifteen hundred dollars apiece. In the late winter

Fate said to John Huffington—"I will make you blind, so that you shall no longer be a great painter."  
John Huffington said to Fate,—“Go ahead and make me blind. I will still paint.”  
“I am nearly blind, I am very deaf, and very bent,” he told Miss Patterson, “but VERY HAPPY!”  
Neighbors and little children love him.  
No wonder Miss Patterson calls him the BRAVEST MAN SHE HAS EVER KNOWN!

an exhibition of his work was given at Macbeth's galleries in New York. It attracted crowds of visitors, and many of the paintings were bought by admirers.

The diseases which have laid their torturing hands upon John Huffington are progressive. For seven years the mists that fell between him and the world were as heavy and dark as the soot clouds that obscured the vision of New Yorkers during the anthracite coal strike. He was as one who walked in a fog that never lifted. After a seven-year period of virtual blindness—as long as that in which Jacob served for Rachel—the curtain slightly lifted, allowing a little light to steal in. By such light John Huffington has painted hundreds of pictures in the five years of his four per cent recovery from blindness.

The slowly crushing pressure upon his bones began the first year of his life and manifested itself by giving him the form of an Atlas before he reached middle age. The recurrent bursting of blood vessels in his eyes, which has culminated in his ninety-six per cent blindness, began a quarter of a century before. Deafness, last of the cumulative evils, made its jeering entry into his life five years ago. For twenty years he has not been able to read a newspaper. He gropes thru the world. He senses it with his nostrils and his soul. Yet his neighbors, who cluster on the hills about the inlet where he moors his house boat home at Rowayton, Conn., call him "Happy Jack."

There was a stretch of black hours when

the smile left his lips, the jest his tongue. His father died on Monday of one week, his mother on the next Wednesday. He awoke, after twenty-four hours of sleep, blind. He groped his way thru the woods on a long afternoon. The devil that whispers of suicide in the ear of every newly blind person tempted him. He listened. He considered. He meditated the means of his outgoing. But when he felt his way to his big, easy chair in the family home at Rowayton, he says his hand encountered the chains that hung

from electric light bulbs. They tinkled and to his lively fancy they spoke a message of hope and courage.

From the moment of the message of the chains John Huffington says that never, even in silence, has he mourned the successive blows of ill fortune.

There were seven years of an almost total eclipse of sight. When the curtain fell that closed to him, as by a wall of lead colored mist, the rest of the world John Huffington reflected: "I cannot read. I cannot work. I will tell myself stories."

"What time is it?" he asked a kindly neighbor who had called at the houseboat that is his abode to inquire what he might do for him. "Eight o'clock" answered the neighbor. "Then there is nothing

you can do, thank you. I mean to test my powers as a novelist tonight."

From eight until two next morning he told himself stories. As beads upon a silk thread he strung the incidents of the life and adventures of a boyhood pet of his. The pet was a



*A lovely photographic study of Mr. Huffington and one of his boy chums, by Jessie Tarbox Beals.*

small gray mule. Her name was Winnie. He named the series of adventures "The Magic of Winnie." For eleven years Winnie had been his companion. He said she possessed infinite charm and super intelligence. Incidents of his drives with Winnie along the silver beaches and in the green woods along Long Island Sound he touched with fancy and his understanding of the psychology of Winnie. Roger was a figure that appeared and reappeared in the tapestry of the fiction. Roger was a dog that his master ranked

he wondered whether the children of the neighborhood might not enjoy them. He invited them to listen to the stories of the "Magic of Winnie". They asked for more. He invented more. He keeps on inventing. The most imaginative of them may soon appear between book covers.

Not only Winnie's adventures but those of persons he knew or had seen, or about whom he had read, were subjects of the stories that the brave blind man told himself. They saved his sanity.



*"Summer in the Berkshires." One of John Huffington's "miracle" paintings.*

above human beings. "He proved himself, for eighteen years, such a superior being that if I did not find him in heaven I should turn around and set off for the other place," is Mr. Huffington's appreciation of his brown setter.

Six delightful hours he spent in retrospective fancy with his pets. So pleasant were they that

John Huffington was the son of an art dealer. He was born in Brooklyn. He spent much time in his father's store in the arcade at 71 Broadway. Before he was ten his father and mother separated. He lived with his father in a home in the woods near Darien, Conn., and cruised with his mother on (Continued on Page 54)

# How to Take Your Daily Mental Dozen

## *Hints on Keeping Your Mind on the Job While Practicing Autosuggestion*

By PHYLLIS V. DuBOIS

“MY spirit is buoyant—I wonder if I locked my desk before I left the office!”

Do you ever begin your autosuggestions in some such jerky fashion? Your mind one second on the suggestion and the next on some foolish, trivial anxiety? I have found thru personal experience that auto-suggestion depends largely for success upon one's attitude of mind when making the suggestions. Naturally they are not going to be of much value when sandwiched between other and conflicting thoughts in this manner.

If we are really honest with ourselves I think that we will admit that the reason these outside thoughts keep jumping up out of turn is because we are not really thinking of the meaning of our suggestions word for word as we mentally affirm them. If we were our minds would be definitely occupied, and our attention so absorbed there would be no interruptions of this kind. When we read an absorbing book are we conscious of anything else for the time being? Do we have jack-in-the-box thoughts about other things?

I have taken some of the following suggestions from the works of various authors, and some from PSYCHOLOGY Magazine, using a number just as I found them. Others I have added to and subtracted from until they met my requirements. In most of them I have substituted “I am” for the “I will” in the originals as I find there is something very didactic about an emphatic “I AM” which makes one's subconscious mind sit up and take notice, tho some will find that “I will” arouses less opposition from the conscious mind and is therefore preferable.

NO. 1: I am quietly receptive to the Universal

Forces, I freely demand them for physical and mental tone.

NO. 2: I am confident in the upbuilding of body and mind to the highest perfection attainable.

NO. 3: My spirit IS buoyant, my body IS well, and functioning harmoniously, my mind IS alert and full of power and concentration, my personal condition IS at its best.

NO. 4: I am charged with vigor in body and mind, I am conscious of adequate and composed power, unused save as I wish.

NO. 5: I am increasing and developing will.

NO. 6: I am increasing and developing the power of my memory.

NO. 7: I am charging the tissues involved thru-out, and the pervading ether with dynamic and harmonious psychic force.

NO. 8: I am properly digesting and assimilating my food which is going to make flesh, blood, bones and muscle.

NO. 9: I am eliminating harmoniously all waste and impurities both mentally and physically.

NO. 10: I am magnetic, mine is the full power of personal magnetism.

NO. 11: I surely expect success, I am unchangeably determined to win success.

NO. 12: I am perfectly equal (adequate) to anything that may come up in my life.

Your subconscious mind will take unto itself and act upon only those suggestions which you clearly and persistently visualize with your conscious mind. Use your imagination and form a clear and concise mental picture of the things upon which you want your subconscious mind to act.

Let us take for (Continued on Page 55)

Life is always better ahead. The best is always yet to come. No other belief is worthy of a real man or woman.

None of us is as good as our ideals. And it is fine that this is true.

We must learn the great lesson of life which is to pass on, pass on—and on. And not look back.

The greatest of us must always be seen in the dreams of what we hope to be, what we desire to become.

Don't look back.

Lovers young and old and would-be lovers should not be discouraged by the Associated Press Dispatch from Philadelphia appearing in the New York Telegram Mail to the effect that there is only one chance in one million that any individual will meet his ideal mate. Practical minded people follow in this respect the advice of most psycho-analysts and have given up the thought of finding that elusive affinity and are

content to make agreeable and helpful matings with congenial partners:

Young men and women have about one chance in a million of meeting their ideal mates, is the opinion of Dr. Karl Greenwood Miller, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Pennsylvania.

"A list of the most important factors entering into the love of a large number of college students," he announced, "prepared from thousands of questionnaires, gives some idea of the extent to which young people conjure in their minds the pictures of their future partners.

"Beautiful eyes are found to be the characteristic that appeals to the greatest number of students. Next is hair, then stature and size, brows, complexion, cheeks, form of head, throat, ears, chin, hands and neck.

The students were asked also to state the characteristics that repelled them. Listed here were deep-set eyes, fullness of neck, big feet, large nose, small stature, long teeth and red hair.

"Mathematicians tell us the chance of holding a royal flush in a game of poker is about one in a million. The chance that a person exists who will meet all requirements is even less."

The New York American contains the following notice of lectures to be given by Dr. Bernard V. Grossman, one of the regular contributors to PSYCHOLOGY Magazine:

B. V. Grossman will speak on "The Truth About Psychoanalysis" at the Labor Temple. Dr. Grossman has opened one of the first psychological clinics in the country. He treats men and women from the normal rather than abnormal condition and has already proved his ability in his profession. He deals with men and women from the mental, social and domestic conditions of life to the end he may aid folks to attain a higher character. His latest and best approved methods are bringing not only help to his clients but also crowning his efforts with real success.

## Can You Be As Brave As This?

(Continued from Page 25)

Long Island Sound. He had much of the love and some of the lore of the woods that John Burroughs had. He transferred by water color the calm aspects of nature to canvas. He showed the beauty of nature in her mild moods. The deep blue of a quiet inlet under a June sky at noon. Trees reflected in an August pool. He essayed oils, and the stronger medium overtaxed his failing sight. The pungent oils assailed his fast weakening eyes.

But during the seven years of his blindness he recalled the spots that had been his favorites. He painted them with fancy's brush. He composed his pictures by mental sight. When a corner of the veil lifted he was ready to paint. By a compensation granted by chance he was able to paint in oils. Before his blindness he painted small water colors for two hundred and fifty dollars each. Now he paints canvasses in oil at six times the price. "God's Mirror", "The White Schooner", "Summer in the Berkshires" and "The Land of Promise" are his most famous paintings.

I asked brave John Huffington for advice to others who seem overwhelmed by the crushing hand of affliction.

"If they can't climb over something that is in their path they must walk around it," he answered. "They must find something new to take the place of the old. When I couldn't see to read,—and no one

likes to read to anyone even for pay—I invented a world of my own and peopled it with fancies.

"When I could no longer distinguish between the voices of my friends, and the ear trumpet only made me nervous, I discovered that I could still distinctly hear by telephone. I installed a radio and found great joy in it. This morning I heard a political speech made in Cincinnati. When my bones had bent so that my back resembled that of Richard III, I sent for the friends whom I could no longer visit and they visited me. I have organized a club of the neighborhood children. They come here two or three times a week to hear my stories of Winnie. A fifteen-year-old boy that his father had told me was incorrigible has become my manly little chum. A seven-year-old who was so sly that his mother talked of sending him to a reformatory has developed a conscience thru my reminders to him: 'You can fool your mother all the time and me part of the time but there's One up there that you can't fool. He'll see you whatever you do.' The seven-year-old friend scolded a little, but decided he has no chance to evade that All Seeing Eye and has become a reasonable little chap. I love children. If I had no other concern, my love for my 'Fifty-Fifty Club' of neighborhood children would furnish all the zest I need.

"I told you that I am a very happy man. I repeat it. If only because I have hundreds of friends

I would be happy.

"I draw upon my inner resources for their entertainment. I don't believe that anyone ever left my boat saying: 'I'm not going back to John Huffington's again. He bores me.'

"I expect again to become blind. That seems inevitable. And it will be final. But I shall recall the pictures I have seen and painted and the dream of the pictures I would paint if I could. There is vast pleasure in visualization.

"The deafness is progressive. Sometime the bending bones will have closed the orifices of my ears and I shall no longer hear. But for that time there will be the pleasures of memory. I am glad I crowded my life with all the experiences that a clean man may do. I saw much that was beautiful, lived much that was sweet. Memory will suffice for many years.

"When the bending bones no longer permit me to move about I shall know the touch of friends' hands. I know that my friends will not fail me. I shall have the compensation of having earned enough by my pictures to save me from the taste of the bitter bread of charity. I shall be glad that the physical ills that befell me were not of my own making. And I shall hope and shall say to those within hearing of my voice that with the transmission of brain and blue blood there will be in a wiser future an inheritance of vitality that will endure.



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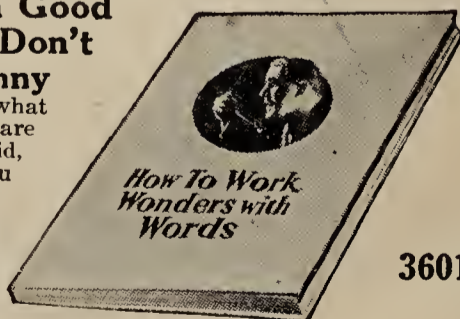
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